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ABSTRACT

Information on Colorado State University's foreign language camps for college students is presented. Advantages of the following two models for camps are identified: a single language camp, and a combination multi-language camp with four languages (Spanish, French, German, and Chinese). Features of the camps include: speaking in the foreign language (except for Chinese), games and activities that encourage talking, and weekend scheduling. In addition to three organizational procedures for starting the camps, a detailed planning schedule is presented, along with four examples of past schedules for language camps. Attention is also directed to funding the camps, participants (students and native speakers), and effective publicity methods. Guidelines for resource persons (foreign students who serve as native speakers) are provided, as well as a sample foreign language camp evaluation questionnaire. It is concluded that benefits of the camps for students are threefold: U.S. students felt motivated to learn a foreign language, the foreign students (native speakers) enjoyed the chance to promote study of their language, and all students and faculty had the opportunity to interact with people across linguistic and cultural boundaries. (SW)

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FOREIGN LANGUAGE CAMPS AT THE COLLEGE LEVEL

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FOREIGN LANGUAGE CAMPS AT THE COLLEGE LEVEL

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FOREIGN LANGUAGE CAMPS AT THE COLLEGE LEVEL

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July 1983

INTRODUCTION:

"Well, if I had known that I was going to France, I would have taken French."

"In high school I took three years of Spanish and never used it."

Many a college adviser, as he is urging a student to take a foreign language, hears these complaints. Unfortunately, he has to admit their validity. In this world, where English has become the international language, it is difficult for students to perceive the value of studying a foreign language.

Recently, two European students, in speaking to a college fraternity, so impressed the men with their fluency in languages and so stimulated interest in travel that the U.S. students asked their advice on what language they should study. The Europeans had to pause; they commented that, for them, the second language is easy to choose -- it's English, the language a German or a Turk studies in order to communicate with a Saudi or a Thai, as well as to use it for communicating with native English speakers. Not so easy is the language to choose when you already know the "international language"; the answer has to be "it depends."

Perhaps convincing students of the relevancy of foreign language study is not possible by using the argument that some day they may need to speak that language. There are other valuable reasons for an American to study a language: to understand another culture, to understand how language reflects cultural patterns, history, and values, to make later language acquisition easier, and for a practical purpose, to learn one's own English grammar through the study of another language. However, one cannot deny that the most exciting motivation is still that of being able to communicate with people from another part of the world.

"I can't afford to travel overseas," is another legitimate complaint. Then let the foreign language experience be brought to the students. Make possible a trip to "Spain" for a weekend at a simulated resort a few physical miles away and many cultural miles from the camp. It's a "poor person's study abroad" which offers to all students, including those with limited money and/or time, the chance to be immersed in a foreign milieu and, for once, feel the need to speak another tongue.

Language camps are not new on a high school level but are rarely offered for college students. This is unfortunate, as it is in college that students frequently drop their studies of foreign languages. It is also true that at the college level the students are willing and eager to experiment with another language; they are less self-conscious, less pressured by their peers to avoid sounding "foreign," and are more aware of the possibilities of future use of a language. An additional advantage of the college-age camps over high school is that the participants themselves plan and execute the camp with a minimum of supervision.

BACKGROUND OF THE CSU CAMP

When the idea of a college language camp was first presented to professors of foreign languages at our university, there was a noticeable lack of enthusiasm. For one reason, some of these professors had been volunteers for the local high school language camps, burdened by the work load and responsibilities that a high school camp entails. They also questioned whether or not such a camp was too juvenile, and they doubted that students would be willing to pay their own way for an educational experience.

These were all reasonable objections but ones which could be overcome. It was important for our planning committee of students to realize that foreign language professors carry probably the heaviest teaching load in a university. It was therefore imperative that they assure the professors that their support,

but not their labor, was wanted. This the students were more than happy to do; they want to run their own programs and have professors and staff people provide only suggestions and support.

The second objection, that the program might be too juvenile, overlooked the fact that the students themselves were to plan the camp; they would decide what would appeal to students. No one would consider travel to Europe too juvenile, even a well-planned, whirlwind tour. This camp was to be just a brief exposure to that kind of "travel." The maturity level of this experience would depend on the planners and the participants.

We find that students will pay their own way if they think the experience is going to be fun, first, and second, worth their time. Even the planners pay half of their own way. The cost is kept low by finding inexpensive lodges (usually those run by churches) with a place to do our own cooking.

In spite of objections and misgivings on the part of some professors and some of our international staff, the first camp was held five years ago. Until last year, Colorado State University, through the Office of International Education, organized separate camps for Spanish and French. Last year, the program was expanded to include a multi-language camp of Spanish, French, German, and Chinese. The rationale for bringing the groups together was to share camp facilities, the general organizational tasks, some of the costs, and to provide some experience in cross-cultural and cross-language communication.

DESCRIPTION OF THE CAMP

We have experiemented with two models, a single language camp and a combination multi-language camp with four languages. There are advantages to both.

For the single language camp:

1. There is not the distraction of hearing another camp.
2. There is no temptation to speak English as the "international

language" with the participants of the other sections of the camp.

3. It is easier to create more of the atmosphere of one country.
4. A smaller camp site is possible.
5. Cooking for a smaller group is simpler.

For the multi-language camp:

1. The languages which have lower enrollments can share facilities of a camp even with as few as 15 participants.
2. Some cost savings can result from shared publicity, facilities, food, etc.
3. A facility is willing to rent space for a group large enough to make it worth their while financially.
4. There is an excitement in associating with many students who are engaged in language study.
5. Since one feels a part of a "national" group, one may be more willing to attempt to speak the language of that "country."

The camps take place on a weekend, Saturday and half of Sunday, at a mountain resort, church camp, YMCA camp, etc.

The camps, except for the Chinese group, enforce the language rule, that is, no English. A foreign atmosphere is created with the use of sign posts giving directions to the camp, use of posters, room signs, food, activities, and resource persons. The camp programs consist of games, sports, movies, slides, talks and discussions, mealtime conversations, parties, and any activities that encourage people to speak.

Organizational procedures:

1. A nucleus of interested students, both foreign and U.S., must be identified who are willing to work as part of the planning committee. These students usually can be found among the work-study students assigned to an international office, students who have just returned

from study abroad, students involved in international activities on campus, or students in language or classes such as anthropology, history, or sociology. The foreign national groups may indicate an interest in such a project and suggest individuals who will take part.

2. From the student group, leaders are chosen and committees set up.
3. Before plans progress, the foreign language professors must be informed and involved as much as they wish. Students must realize that the professors will have little time for committee meetings but should be kept well informed of the plans. The first contact should be with the Department Head and some professors who the students think would be interested.

See following section for detailed planning schedule.

LANGUAGE CAMP PLANNING SCHEDULE

(as used by Colorado State University Office of International Education)

I. Identify leaders and schedule a meeting; appoint chairman or co chairmen.

II. Arrange a meeting of interested persons, leaders, and native speakers. Discuss the general outlines of a camp, the purpose, and brainstorm ways to meet that purpose. Use former guidelines and evaluations to guide the group. Choose a date and camp site.

III. Reserve the date and site early. Get arrangements in written form and place a deposit for the facilities.

IV. The leaders meet with the Chairman of the Foreign Language Department and other professors whom the Department Chairman chooses. Discuss the camp, get their suggestions, and enlist their help in promoting the camp in their language classes.

V. Two months before the camp

A. Announce the date and site in the Collegian (student newspaper) and in a flyer to each professor in the language classes.

B. Hold meetings to plan the schedule.

1. Make basic suggestions on food (letting the person in charge make the final decisions).
2. Make general plans for activities of the camp.
3. Divide up the tasks: set deadlines for completion of tasks and for sign-up for the camp (the previous Monday for a Saturday camp).
4. Responsibilities

a. Activities

b. Schedule (reproduce it for all members)

c. Equipment, e.g., volleyball and net, paper, pencils

d. Signs in languages

e. Song sheets for everyone

f. Musical equipment -- PA system and personal instruments

g. A-V equipment

h. Food

i. Room assignments

j. Car assignments, payment of drivers from camp fee for gas expense (actual cost), maps for drivers

k. Name tags and arrangements to have them distributed efficiently

l. Decorations to create atmosphere

m. Team of four people to go up the evening before to set up the camp

n. Publicity: flyers, ads in the paper, posters (handmade), articles for newspapers, radio announcements

4. Appoint a treasurer who works closely with office secretary to handle finances for the camp.

VI. One month before the camp

A. Distribute flyers to all classes of appropriate languages.

B. Put ad in Collegian (school newspaper)

C. Try to get an in-depth article in the Collegian (work with office work-study in charge of publicity).

D. Sign up students and collect camp fees (no one is registered until payment is received.)

VII. One week before the camp -- confirm all plans

VIII. During the final week, make car and room assignments

IX. Morning of the camp: Meet at the International Office (leaders meet at least one-half hour before)

A. Arrange name tag distribution.

B. Distribute driving maps.

NOTE: Have Driver Chairman check off cars as they leave, being sure they are full and that large "gas guzzlers" are not used if not needed.

X. Finances: Each camper pays for room and food, kitchen or camp fee, at least $2.00 for gas, $1.00 for materials, and $1.00 for miscellaneous expenses. Resource persons (6-10 depending on the size of the camp) pay half the fee, the rest of the fee being subsidized by a Service Club (Rotary), or, in case of a Spanish Camp, by the Latin American Student Organization.

XI. Pass out evaluation sheets the last morning of the camp.

XII. Hold an evaluation session one week after the camp. Invite all resource persons. Campers are welcome to come.

XIII. Prepare a report of suggestions for the next camp.

ACTIVITIES AND SCHEDULES

The schedules vary in each camp. Below are some examples of past schedules. The emphasis should be on small group activities which involve conversation. Small groups designed for several levels of proficiency are needed, with leadership provided by native speakers in each group. A few large group programs may be used, such as the Saturday evening party, but the most effective for language training are the small group activities.

The general schedule for a language camp begins with travel to the camp in the morning in private cars in which a native speaker is present. It is his/her task to help the students begin speaking in the foreign language, translating some of the signs by the road and teaching the names of whatever they see.

At the camp, appropriate atmosphere can be provided by signs, posters, music, and check-in sheets. (The foreign students have insisted on having people fill out "hotel registration" forms if we wanted to have an authentic atmosphere.) Simulated passports and money changing of a high school camp are not needed nor appreciated at this level.

Upon arrival, the student must speak the language to get a room assignment, request a meal ticket, or read the signs. An opening meeting for each separate group is scheduled after check-in. The manager of the camp speaks to the group in English with the "country's" interpreter translating as he speaks.

The first activity is lunch with the sack lunches which each person brings, all the time learning new words for the activity in which they are engaged.

The afternoon is given over to sports, nature hikes with lists of names of what they will see, scavenger hunts, and treasure hunts.

An intercultural experience is provided by a simple discussion of cultural differences (some translation allowed) and skits the students prepare illustrating different behavior patterns.

Dinner involves practicing the language as they set the table, cook, and clean up. The food, a gourmet adventure, provides samples of dishes from all four

language areas. The language groups sat at separate tables but all shared the same menu, though the Chinese insisted in preserving their "cultural pattern" by eating with chopsticks whatever was served!

For some of the beginners, the meal time is the most useful because the native speakers at each table can keep the conversation within their reach and still have the novices say something of significance such as "Please pass the milk."

EXAMPLES OF LANGUAGE CAMP SCHEDULES

SPANISH CAMP

Saturday

8:00 a.m. Meet at Office of International Education
8:30 a.m. Leave for Highlands Camp
10:00 a.m. Arrive at Camp
10:30 a.m. Large group meeting for presentation of Schedule, Rules, etc., and for introductions (names, student's major, where from, travel, etc., by each camper)
11:15 a.m. Small group gatherings (draw a picture describing self and interests)
11:45 a.m. Game: put names of animals, foods, etc., on people's backs for a guessing game.
Noon Lunch
1:00 p.m. Game: Divide into teams, each with specific instructions (in Spanish) of tasks to accomplish at different locations (e.g., answer questions, find different kinds of leaves, make and wear some kind of hat), completing each task before going on to the next station.
1:30 p.m. Topi-talk. Each person answers questions in small discussion groups.
2:00 p.m. Plan skits for Sunday in small groups
4:30 p.m. "Cultural Sensitivity" skits by resource people followed by small group discussions.
6:00 p.m. Dinner
7:00 p.m. Slides (Spain, Galapagos, Mexico -- choose one)
7:30 p.m. Music and singing
8:00 p.m. Free time
8:45 p.m. Party/dancing. Lessons in Latin and North American Dances

Sunday Morning

8:00 a.m. Breakfast
9:00 a.m. Clean-up and pack
9:30 a.m. Skits (prepared in early afternoon on Saturday)
10:00 a.m. Feedback, evaluation, closing

CHINESE CAMP

10:30 a.m. Introductions in main lodge
11:30 a.m. Teach names in Chinese and some Chinese expressions of introduction
12:30 p.m. Lunch
2:30 p.m. Kung Fu lessons
3:30 p.m. Calligraphy
4:30 p.m. Informal discussion while making Won Ton together
6:30 p.m. Dinner
8:00 p.m. Singing of Chinese songs
9:00 p.m. Party -- demonstrate Kung Fu to entire group

Sunday Morning

8:00 a.m. Breakfast
9:00 a.m. Gather to practice Chinese

GERMAN CAMP

Samstag

10:30 a.m.	Schmucken und Brezel-backen
11:00 a.m.	Hittagessen
11:45 a.m.	Spiele
12:45 p.m.	Lichbildervortrag über Deutschland
2:00 a.m.	Liederslugen
5:00 p.m.	Abendessen
8:00 p.m.	Fest

Sonntag

10:00 a.m.	Brunch (Spates Frühstuck)
11:00 a.m.	Wandern, Schneemann
11:30 a.m.	Lieder, Saubermadien

PROGRAMME DES FESTIVITES

SAMEDI

10.15 Départ d'Aylesworth

12:00 Arrivée au camp et pique nique

13:00 - 13:30

Petite réunion d'information pour prendre contact avec les responsables du camp - Presentation des locaux et des activités pour le week end.

Afin de mieux connaître les aspirations des participants il leur sera demandé de remplir un questionnaire informatif.

13:30 - 18:00

Activités diverses : parties de boules, volleyball, tir a cheval, balades en montagne.

En cas de mauvais temps des jeux de jaquet, cartes, diamino, arvali seront organisés.

15:30 - 17:00

Portes ouvertes au Café - Salon de Thé.

19:30 - 20:30

Dinner

21:00 Cinéma, Diapositives ... suivis d'une soirée dansante et chantante.

DIMANCHE

8:00 - 9:00

Petit déjeuner

9:00 - 11:00

Activités diverses.

11:00 - 12:00

Dejeuner.

12:00 - 13:00 Nettoyage avant le départ !

FUNDING

As is true in many international offices, virtually no funds exist for special programming such as language camps. Foreign language departments, usually among the poorest on campuses, cannot be expected to provide any subsidies. Therefore, the camps must be almost self-supporting. Each student pays enough to cover his/her own costs -- in this case for food (dinner and Sunday brunch; they bring their Saturday sack lunch), gas sharing, and lodging with their own sleeping bags for $17.00 for the two days. Those who are resource persons pay half of their fare and the chairperson is not charged. All staff of the International Offices who serve as resource persons are expected to pay their own way. The subsidies for the helpers come from two sources. First, a local Service Club (Rotary) offers program money to the International Offices. Second, the national group for the Latin Americans have subsidized their Latino resource persons. The other national groups have had no funds.

Slide shows and projectors are donated. No money is spent on entertainment; either the students provide it or local groups donate their talents, for the cost of a meal.

The International Office absorbs expenses of flyers and newspaper ads.

PARTICIPANTS

Special encouragement is given to second year language students (and above) and to the native speakers (our foreign students at the university) to attend the camps. However, anyone interested is welcome to attend, if they are willing to abide by the language rule. Even first year students have been permitted to go if they are eager to try. The exception to the restriction on the language rule is made for students of Chinese whose language ability is not sufficient to limit themselves to Chinese; instead they experience Chinese culture and practice saying the little they do know.

Since there are people whose language abilities range from those who have little knowledge beyond the names of the silverware, to those who have spent time overseas and now want to keep up their language there needs to be a variety of experiences provided with different native speakers leading each group. Native speakers are asked to work with small groups and to sit with ability groups at mealtime so conversation can be at an appropriate level. The native speakers are vital to the success of a camp. We try to have about one-third native speakers, some of whom serve as resource persons and on the planning committee, and others who simply want to join the camp. Below are some guidelines compiled for the resource persons.

GUIDELINES FOR RESOURCE PERSONS* AT THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CAMPS

A. Before the camp

1. Attend the planning meetings
2. Contact people who may be interested in attending the camp
3. Help plan the schedule for activities.
4. Help make signs in the language (e.g., "Welcome to_____Camp," "Park here")
5. Help the chairman assign duties at the camp.

B. The day before the camp be sure someone from your language group will go with the early group to set up your signs, posters, etc., to create the "foreign environment" for your camp.

C. During the camp

1. Help students speak the language while they are riding to the camp. Point out objects and name them. Give short, descriptive explanations of what they are seeing on the trip.
2. Welcome the students to your "country."
3. Take part in the initial introductions -- help the students practice the phrases necessary to introduce someone.
4. Seek out the students who are not speaking the language and help them say, at least, some simple phrases.
5. At meal times, sit with U.S. students. Have them introduce each other so that all at a table are well acquainted. If they are at a low level of the language, help them learn the words for things at the table (e.g., "this is a fork," "do you like_____?" How do you prepare it in your country?" Describe a hamburger -- in your language).
6. During the activity time, take charge of what has been assigned to you and try to include all the students.
7. Be alert to language problems of the students. If you see some students becoming frustrated or bored, help them express those feelings in your language.
8. Avoid English -- use only when an explanation is necessary.
9. At the party, English will be spoken but many students from other language groups may want to practice speaking your language. Introduce people to each other -- even if you haven't met them before.

Enjoy yourself. Many thanks for helping our U.S. students have a chance to "live" in your country for two days.

*Resource persons are the foreign students who serve as "native speakers" in the simulated country.

PUBLICITY

The following methods have proven effective.

1. Presentations by students about the camps to all language classes. (Students should be reminded to get permission to make their five minute presentations from the professors in advance.)
2. Distribution of flyers to all language classes and other classes which might have an interest, eg. anthropology, history.
3. Posting of flyers in the residence halls, student activities centers, fraternities, sororities. etc.
4. Publishing of notices in the college newspaper encouraging all to come whether they are presently in a language class or not.
5. Personal requests to native speakers and their organizations.

NOTE: the Office of International Education absorbs the cost of this publicity.

EVALUATION

A written questionaire is given to each participant to complete and return before leaving the camp. The following is a sample questionaire to elicit comments, not statistical evidence. We have tried both and find the comments of value for the purpose of improving the camps.

FOREIGN LANGUAGE CAMP EVALUATION QUESTIONAIRE

Please comment on the following items--whether you thought they were excellent, good, or poor. Please add your suggestions and other remarks.

1. The atmosphere of the camp (that is, did it reflect the culture of your language group?)
2. Food
3. Party Saturday night
4. The activities of your camp
   a. For high level language students

   b. For low level language students
5. Amount of language practice you had.
6. If you were planning next year's camp, what would you do to help the foreign language students get as much practice speaking and as much immersion into the culture as possible?

Other comments and suggestions:

Following are some comments from past years' evaluations of language camps held at CSU.

On the activities:

"Good for high-level language students because there were enough native speakers to challenge the advanced students."

"Also very good for low-level language students because the leaders were conscious of speaking slowly and clearly so that everyone could understand and participate."

"I feel I can return to my German class with a better working vocabulary and much more confidence."

On the amount of language practice:

"It depended on how much you put into it."

"I got a lot of practice and I learned a lot of new things about the language and the people."

"This was restricted because of my poor command of French, but the opportunity to be immersed in the language was great. I learned a lot, only wish the time was longer."

"Just talking to natives is very good."

"More than I've ever tried. Really gave me some confidence."

"I had a great weekend. I'll come next year!"

CONCLUSION

The general agreement was that a multi-language camp did not detract from the students' concentration on their own language and most seemed to enjoy meeting others who were also engaged in the pursuit of language.

Because the students were immersed in the language, they were able, even in the short weekend, to increase their confidence in speaking and to become a bit more fluent. They had the opportunity, rare for an American, to be in a position of needing to use a foreign language. They experienced the joy of communicating in another tongue.

The benefits were at least three-fold. First, the U.S. students felt motivated to carry on the struggle to learn a foreign language. Second, the foreign students (the native speakers) enjoyed having the chance to promote the study of their language; thirdly, and probably of the most benefit, the students, foreign and U.S., and the professors had the chance to interact with people across cultural and linguistic boundaries.

The students evidently felt a part of their linguistic groups. To an observer, the amazing thing was to see how perfectly they fit their cultural stereotypes without realizing it. The "Latins were a large, noisy group which partied much of the time with little regard to the schedule they had set up. The "French" complained that the "Germans" were too boisterous and that they took over the party, which the Germans did, and most of the "Chinese" left the party early and went to bed.